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INDONESIA: INFLUENTIAL ISLAMIC STATE CLERIC GOES ON TRIAL

Alexander Sehmer

Indonesia has put on trial an Islamist cleric alleged to have been behind the 2016 shooting and suicide bombing attack in Jakarta. Although the trial is welcome, another conviction against him is unlikely to weaken the Islamic State (IS)-aligned group he is accused of heading.

Aman Abdurrahman (a.k.a. Oman Rochman) was indicted in a Jakarta court on February 15, accused of inciting others to carry out attacks between 2016 and 2017 (Jakarta Post, February 15; Benar, February 15). Among the violence he is accused of inspiring is the attack by gunmen and suicide bombers on a shopping mall in central Jakarta on January 14, 2016, in which four people were killed (Jakarta Post, February 18).

Abdurrahman has not taken part in any of the attacks himself, because he has been in jail since 2010. Nonetheless, he has remained influential, including supposedly putting out a call from his prison cell exhorting his followers to join Islamist militants fighting in Marawi, in the southern Philippines (ABS-CBN, June 9, 2017). Indeed, his influence is such that in late 2016 he was moved to solitary confinement on the Nusakambangan prison island south of Java (Straits Times, February 15).

A former university lecturer, Abdurrahman is considered to be the ideological leader of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), an IS-aligned group that emerged in Indonesia in 2015 (Tempo, March 21, 2015). The group appears to bring together militants with IS sympathies from a variety of different factions, and it was designated a terrorist organization by the United States last year (Jakarta Post, January 11, 2017).

According to a recent United Nations report on IS activities, JAD is one of two key IS-aligned groups currently menacing Indonesia (See UNSC S/2018/80). The other is Jamaah Ansarul Khilafah (JAK), led by Abu Husna (a.k.a. Adurrahim bin Thotib), a longtime friend and former cellmate of Jemaah Islamiyah ideologue Abu Bakar Bashir. Husna, who was convicted in 2009, was himself a Jemaah Islamiyah leader, heading the group's "education" division.

Jailing Abdurrahman and Bashir back in 2010—the two were convicted after they established an Islamist training

camp under a single banner in Aceh Province—was a success for Indonesia in the fight against terrorism, but putting the pair behind bars has failed to stop their influence on the region's Islamists.

If convicted in his new trial, Abdurrahman could face the death penalty. However, while he is doubtless a key influencer, he is unlikely to be central to JAD's operations, leaving both it and Husna's group as serious threats to Indonesian security.

YEMEN: KEEPING ISLAMIC STATE IN PERSPECTIVE

Alexander Sehmer

A division of Islamic State (IS) in Yemen has claimed an attack on Houthi forces in Ibb governorate—its first in months. It comes as there is a renewed focus on IS in Yemen, though the real jihadist threat in the country remains al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

In a message on the Telegram app on February 18, Liwa al-Akhdar, a contingent of IS fighters operating in Ibb, claimed to have killed five Houthi fighters and wounded a number of others, using an improvised explosive device (IED) in the al-Shaar neighborhood of the main city of Ibb. The attack ends nearly 13 months of silence from the IS affiliate in Ibb. The last attack it claimed was a suicide blast at a Houthi checkpoint in January last year (SITE, January 24, 2017).

Instead, IS has concentrated on building its forces in neighboring al-Bayda, where it set up training camps in sparsely populated areas of the province (AMN [Lebanon], June 12, 2017). In October, when the United States expanded its Yemen counter-terrorism operations, these bases were targeted in airstrikes (U.S. Department of Defense, October 16, 2017).

IS in Yemen effectively came into being in November 2014 with the release of an audio recording of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in which the IS leader recognized pledges of allegiance by groups around the region, including in Yemen (Daily Star [Lebanon], November 14, 2014). IS in Yemen carried out its first major attack in March 2015, with twin suicide blasts at Houthi mosques in the capital Sana'a, killing at least 137 people (al-Jazeera, March 21, 2015). In another audio recording in May that year, al-Baghdadi congratulated the Yemen *wilayat* (province) for advances it had made against the Houthis (MEMRI, May 14, 2015).

However, while IS in Yemen has expanded—U.S. intelligence estimates are that the group doubled in size last year—it still consists of disparate groups that are yet to see any territorial victories.

AQAP, by contrast, has been well established in Yemen since the 1990s and is a key part of the global al-Qaeda network. It has cultivated local relationships, maintained its safe havens and governed territory, including suc-

cessfully running the port of al-Mukalla, Yemen's fifth largest city, for a year, before being pushed out by United Arab Emirates-backed troops (TRT World, April 24, 2016).

Both AQAP and IS have benefited from the years of devastation wrought by Yemen's civil war as a Saudi-backed coalition attempts to defeat the Houthis and reinstall Yemen's President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi. Sectarianism, insecurity and a ruined economy have made Yemen fertile ground for jihadists. AQAP particularly has been able to use the Saudi-backed coalition's blinkered focus on defeating the Houthis to paint itself as a potential ally for anti-Houthi Sunnis. It is this pragmatic approach that means AQAP, despite IS' recent gains, remains the real jihadist threat in Yemen.

The Potential for a New Strand of Islamist Extremism in Pakistan

Farhan Zahid

The emergence of violent Barelvi extremism in Pakistan was brought sharply to the country's attention last year when Tehreek-i-Labaik Ya Rasool Allah, an Islamist political party, staged an almost month-long sit-in that later turned violent.

The party objected to an alleged change to the wording of the oath of office contained in the 2017 Election Bill, which it considered to be blasphemous, and demanded the resignation of then-Federal Minister of Law and Justice Zahid Hamid. Police operations to uproot the protesters served only to spread the protests wider, paralyzing the whole state apparatus.

Barelvi extremism is a new phenomenon, a potential threat still in the making, but one that the Pakistani government must address.

A New Strain of Extremism

Most militant Islamist organizations in South Asia—and particularly in Pakistan—adhere to either the Deobandi-Sunni or Ahl-e-Hadith (Salafist) schools of Islam. Prominent among these are Deobandi organizations like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Harkat ul Jihad-e-Islami, Harkat ul Mujahedeen, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Omar and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda, Islamic State, Waliyat-e-Khurasan, Hizb-ut Tahrir and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) adhere to the Salafist tradition.

By contrast, before the emergence of Tehreek-i-Labaik, no Islamist organization belonging to the Barelvi sect of Sunni Islam had been involved in violent activities. Sunni Tehreek, a Barelvi group that is now part of Tehreek-i-Labaik, was considered by some to have violent tendencies, but it was not a designated terrorist organization.

Barelvism is a South Asian variant of Sufi Islam and is widely practiced in the region. While there are no official figures, it is possible that about 70 percent of Pakistanis adhere to the Hanafi-Sunni sect of Islam, and of those more than half are Barelvi Sunni. [1] As a consequence,

Tehreek-i-Labaik considers itself to be the representative of Pakistan's religious majority.

In this respect, it enjoys some level of support at the community level for two main reasons. First, because it purports to safeguard the rights of Pakistan's sizeable Barelvi population; and second, because it has framed its purpose in terms of fighting against blasphemers and protesting any move by the government to amend Pakistan's anti-blasphemy law.

Prior to the 2017 protests, Barelvi leaders Syed Khadim Hussain Rizvi and Dr. Ashraf Jalali, considered the founders of Tehreek-i-Labaik, had not enjoyed much prominence. However, in recent by-elections in three different constituencies, candidates backed by their party managed to win 5-10 percent of the popular vote, a small but impressive performance for a party that has only just emerged on the Pakistani political landscape. In the latest poll at a provincial assembly constituency of Chakwal district in Punjab province, the Tehreek-i-Labaik-backed candidate came in third place, surprising media pundits (Samaa News, January 9).

Violent Tendencies

Violent Barelvi extremism gained momentum following the assassination of Punjab Governor Salman Taseer by Mumtaz Qadri, his police bodyguard, in Islamabad in January 2011 (Dawn, January 5, 2011). Qadri, a diehard follower of the Barelvis proselytizing group Dawat-e-Islami, blamed the governor for visiting a convicted Christian woman, Aasia Bibi, in prison, who had been found guilty of committing blasphemy against the Prophet Mohammad by the court. Qadri was later sentenced to death and executed in February 2016 (Dawn, February 29, 2016).

In the wake of Taseer's assassination, a number of Barelvi parties joined hands to stage massive protests across the country, objecting to Qadri's trial, which they viewed as unjust. On the day of Qadri's funeral, on March 1, 2016, Tehreek-i-Labaik leaders called on their supporters to gather in Rawalpindi, a city adjacent to Islamabad, and in response, hundreds of thousands attended the funeral procession (The Hindu, March 1, 2016).

During last year's Tehreek-i-Labaik protests, government attempts to engage the party's leadership in dialogue to end the 18-day-long sit-in failed. The resulting police operation against the crowd of more than one thousand Tehreek-i-Labaik protestors was unsuccessful and instead sparked violence. Protesters burned vehicles and attacked passersby in the capital. Six protesters were killed in clashes with police in Rawalpindi, while 40 personnel of the Rawalpindi police, 76 members of the Islamabad Capital Territory police, 64 Frontier Constabulary personnel and 50 civilians were injured (Express Tribune, November 25, 2017).

The district administration of Islamabad Capital Territory called for the deployment of the military to restore order (Dawn, November 25, 2017). Tehreek-i-Labaik leader Rizvi ordered his followers to stage sit-ins across the country, and in response, Tehreek-i-Labaik workers across Pakistan turned violent, cutting off the national communications and railway networks. They blocked roads, damaged railway tracks and vandalized public and private property. After a day of violent protests across the country, the government accepted Tehreek-i-Labaik's terms to end the protests, including sacking the justice minister.

Changing Fortunes

Describing the reasons behind the Barelvi outburst, an Islamabad-based Tehreek-i-Labaik leader explained that his party had acted to protect Pakistan's blasphemy laws amid "rumors" that the government's amendment was the result of U.S. and Western pressure. [2]

He also indicated that a lack of strong leadership among the Barelvi community had put Barelvi interests under threat, leading to the forcible appropriation of Barelvi mosques and seminaries by Deobandi extremists, terrorist attacks on Sufi shrines across Pakistan and the assassination of important Barelvi leaders. A significant event in this regard was the Nishtar Park suicide attack in 2005 in Karachi, in which a number of prominent Barelvi sect leaders were killed (Dawn, January 14, 2016).

The law enforcement agencies' inability or unwillingness to tackle Deobandi and Salafist militancy in Pakistan has posed grave dangers to Barelvis, he said.

The rise of Tehreek-i-Labaik is a direct result of that failure, and heading the movement is its wheelchair-bound leader Khadim Hussain Rizvi, who masterminded the 2017 sit-in. Born in 1966 in Pindi Gheb, Punjab province, Rizvi attended his local madrasa where he memo-

rized the Quran and later became a prayer leader in a Lahore mosque. He worked for a time in Auquf department of Punjab government, and has been in a wheelchair since 2006 when he was left disabled in a road accident (Dawn, December 3, 2017). While his speeches lack the eloquence of politicians and are full of foul language and colloquialisms, he has, according to his supporters, filled a void in the Barelvi leadership.

Future Prospects

The events of 2017 illustrate both the level of support Tehreek-i-Labaik has in urban centers across Pakistan, and the party's willingness to resort to violent protest. It invokes emotive issues, such as the country's blasphemy laws, and relies on a religiously charged agenda, deepening social divides along sectarian lines and bringing with it the risk of intra-Sunni communal violence. It cannot be ruled out that, in the future, it may develop a militant wing to combat Deobandi and Salafist terrorist organizations, further weakening state control.

With Pakistan due to hold a general election in July, there is the possibility Tehreek-i-Labaik's Islamist candidates could win a small number of seats in parliament and gain greater political clout. Conversely, if its candidates fail to win any parliamentary representation, it could change tack and remain outside of the political system as a violent Islamist movement

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[1] See estimates on GlobalSecurity.org

[2] Author's discussions with senior Tehreek-i-Labaik leader in Islamabad (December 20, 2017).

Ending Islamic State: Dealing With Women and Children Returnees in the North Caucasus

Aleksandre Kvakhadze

In the spring of 2016, Islamic State (IS) propagandists released an unusual video purporting to show the famous Chechen pop-singer Azza Bataeva, previously known for her provocative clothing, wearing a niqab and calling on Muslims to join "the path of Allah," as she tore up her Russian passport (Kavkazskii Uzel, April 22, 2016). The video was some of the first evidence of North Caucasian female jihadist activism in Syria and Iraq.

As IS is dislodged from its captured territories, the return to their home countries of militants' families has become a concern, albeit one that is under-examined. According to Russian officials, about 445 Russian children were taken to the conflict zone, more than half of whom were under the age of three and have since effectively grown up under IS tutelage (Kavkazskii Uzel, January 17).

In the North Caucasus, human rights organizations and local authorities have voiced concerns. A failure to properly reintegrate indoctrinated women and children into the local communities could lead to new tensions in the traditional but fragile North Caucasian society.

The Attraction of the Five-Star Jihad

Historically, the role of female actors in the North Caucasian insurgency has been marginal, but the emergence of IS changed that. The group encouraged many North Caucasian women to participate in some form by moving to IS-held territories and bring their children with them.

The most intensive migration of women and children to IS-captured territories was in 2015. [1] The large rebel-held territories in Syria and Iraq, with their functional infrastructure and favorable conditions for civilian life, presented a more comfortable alternative to a life of jihad carried out in the forested mountains of the North

Caucasus. While some women were encouraged to make *hijrah* (migration or journey) to IS-held territories, with no expectation of returning home, by their husbands, for others the intensive promotion by IS of a "pure" sharia lifestyle within its territories will have held its own appeal. Even girls from affluent families, such as Seda Dudurkaeva, the daughter of a Chechen official, were attracted by IS' so-called "five-star" jihad (Chechens in Syria, November 9, 2014).

Nine Chechen women are reported to have joined the all-female, Raqqa-based al-Khansaa brigade (Novaya Gazeta, October 29, 2017). However, information about female IS recruits is scarce, and the primary function of IS women in Syria and Iraq is most likely to have been to take care of the children and offer support to the men, rather than take part in active combatant.

Following the rapid withdrawal of IS from major settlements, foreign non-combatants have found themselves deprived of sanctuary. Many ethnic Chechen fighters sent their family members to the relative safety of Idlib province in Syria, under the protection of non-IS Caucasian armed groups. Others were unable to send family members away. Those left behind in Mosul have been captured by Iraqi forces, and those in Raqqa were picked up by Kurdish groups. It appears that scores of Caucasian women and children are today waiting to be deported back to Russia, despite the uncertain future they face there. [2]

Repatriation Raises Security Concerns

From interviews with Caucasian women returning from IS-held territories, it is evident the many have become disillusioned and no longer share the group's ideology. However, there can be no denying that they present a potential security threat in the North Caucasus. In previous jihadist conflicts, women have proved to be efficient recruiters, indoctrinating younger women and recruiting "jihadi brides" for arranged marriages with members of the insurgency. Female jihadists are often particularly vulnerable to being co-opted as suicide bombers if they have lost their husband or another family member. During the Second Chechen War, for example, the majority of female suicide bombers were driven by a sense of revenge, rather than a belief in the ideology of jihad (Komsomolskaya Pravda, October 22, 2003). The female Dagestani suicide bomber Diana Ramazanova, who blew herself up near the Sultanahmet mosque in Istanbul in January 2015, was the widow of Chechen IS militant Abu Edelbiev (Hurriyet, January 16, 2015).

Another problem is related to Caucasian children who have grown up as part of IS. Children taken to the conflict zone by their parents are clearly victims. However, brought up on the ideology of IS, they are at the same time potential perpetrators. The case of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo shows that former child soldiers display higher levels of aggression than adult ex-combatants and are more difficult to reintegrate into society. [3] Having been deprived of a normal education, undergone indoctrination and lived in a high-stress environment, those difficulties are understandable.

IS categorized children over 15 as adults and allowed them to participate in combat, even younger children were trained to fight. A report by the UN Commissioner for Human Rights on the combat training of 12-year-old Chechen children in Tal Afar in Iraq, and reported cases of atrocities carried out by Kazakh child soldiers, offers some indication of the potential threat (nur.kz 19 December, 2014). [4] It is also one for which North Caucasian society is unprepared. During the Chechen Wars, the mujahideen leadership refrained from conscripting child soldiers. As a consequence, the society has never had to face the problem of child militancy and has no expertise in countering it.

No Formal Strategy

There are a host of technical and legal problems connected with the return of these individuals. Bureaucratic barriers imposed by the Iraqi and Syrian governments make repatriation difficult. The situation is further complicated by the difficulties that Russian officials face when attempting to verify the identity of children born in Syria or Iraq, especially if they are unable to communicate in either Russian or one of the Caucasian dialects.

Another challenge lies in the re-education of returned children. The traditional educational and social systems are not designed with former child soldiers in mind. Without a focus on debunking IS ideology, there is the possibility of their future engagement in violent activities.

There is also the issue of trust. Instead of using disillusioned female returnees as effective counter-propagan-

da tools to combat radicalization, the Russian security services have insisted on pursuing a hardline policy. In one case, three Dagestani women who were encouraged to return by the local government were immediately apprehended by state security services upon arrival (Kavkazskii Uzel, December 1, 2017). This policy of suppression is leading to mistrust and the fear of criminal prosecution, making reintegration more complicated and increasing the risk of extremism.

Despite efforts by the Russian government to have Russian female citizens and their children returned from Syria and Iraq, there is no short- or long-term strategy for their social reintegration when they make it back. Instead, regional leaders such as Chechnya's Ramzan Kadyrov are simply using the process to paint a dovish picture of themselves for Caucasian Muslims.

The participation of women and children in the Middle Eastern conflict is a complex problem and a relatively new phenomenon for the North Caucasus. The Russian authorities' insistence on continuing a rough counterinsurgency policy—known colloquially as *mochit v sortire* (roughly "kill them even in the restroom")—instead of focusing on a long-term solution is likely only to entrench grievances and foster radicalization in North Caucasian society.

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NOTES

[1] Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees. The Soufan Center. October 2017, p. 5

[2] Information from the author's own fieldwork in the Pankisi Gorge (January 2018)

[3] Katharin Hermenau, Tobias Hecker, Anna Maedl, Maggie Schauer & Thomas Elbert (2013), Growing Up in Armed Groups: Trauma and Aggression Among Child Soldiers in DR Congo, European Journal of Psychotraumatology, 4:1, p. 7

[4] OHCHR; A Call for Accountability and Protection: Yezidi Survivors of Atrocities Committed by ISIL, p. 12

Libya's Rogue Militias Keep the Country From Tackling Human Trafficking

Alessandra Bocchi

Since 2014, people smuggling and human trafficking has become a lucrative business in Libya, benefiting the country's rival militias and tribes, but fueling instability. Efforts by the European Union (EU), in particular Italy, to combat the problem have had some partial success—in one of the most effective moves, an agreement reached in August last year between Italy and Libya's UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) saw Rome pay the GNA to prevent migrant departures (Agenzia Nova, September 22, 2017).

However, fighting in Libya's coastal cities between the forces of the GNA, the rival General National Congress (GNC) and the Libyan National Army (LNA), led by General Khalifa Haftar, continues to complicate efforts to halt the "trade" in passage to Europe. Furthermore, the militias stand to gain much from their involvement, making it even harder to bring an end to human trafficking in Libya.

The Problem of Rogue Militias

Up until the agreement reached last August between the GNA and the Italian government, the main militias facilitating people smuggling on the coast were based in Zawiyah, Zuwarah and Sabratha. The situation is still not fully resolved as even after the deal there have been clashes in Sabratha between the so-called Anti-Islamic State Operations Room (AIOR), backed by Haftar's forces, and the 48th Brigade militia and its allies. The two are rivals anyway, but Haftar has accused the 48th Brigade, which the GNA says is part of the armed force, of involvement in people smuggling (Libya Herald, September 21, 2017).

In fact, Hafter has proved to be effective at stemming the flow of migrants transiting through the country's northeast. Whereas, despite the deal with Italy, human trafficking has remained an acute problem in Libya's northwest, where there are both government-aligned militias—groups that fall under the control of either the GNA or the GNC in Tripoli—and "rogue" militias, which

are outside of government control and without government financing.

Without government support, these rogue militias rely on income from people trafficking and the smuggling of oil and arms. According to one analyst, trafficking gangs with links to Libyan militias in the south can demand between 1,000 to 1,500 Libyan dinars ($800 to $1,100) to take migrants as far as Tripoli. [1]

If migrants are unable to pay, they are handed over directly to rogue militias who place them in safe houses owned by armed gangs. There the migrants will usually try to call home, requesting money to pay for their release. If their families are unable to pay, the militias sell them to wealthy Libyans who need cheap labor on their farms or on construction sites. These African migrants in effect become independent laborers for Libyans who provide them little in the way of pay or maintenance for the work they do. [2] Some may be passed as slaves among the different militias, while the more fortunate ones are sold to wealthy Libyans and become employees who can eventually earn enough money to pay to escape the country. Others will end up in the hands of government-aligned militias who then place them in detention centers awaiting deportation.

Some evidence indicates that greater international reporting on the slave trade in Libya over recent months has led wealthy Libyans who employ migrants as cheap labor to increase their wages and improve their living conditions.

While the main routes to Europe on Libya's western coasts have been effectively closed thanks to the August deal, other routes have opened in areas like Garabulli, which is situated about 70 kilometers east of Tripoli. However, while the flow across the Mediterranean continues, it is at a lower rate than before.

The effect has been that an increasing number of migrants remain stuck in Libya. At the same time, arrivals into Libya have continued apace. While the GNA has seen some gains in terms of its territorial control, the number of migrants entering the country is increasing faster than the government is able to facilitate deportations, leading to overcrowding in Libya's detention centers. To try to temporarily alleviate the problem, the GNA has tried to turn unused warehouses and buildings into new detention centers, offering the owners payments and supplying armed guards.

Overcrowding has also meant that there are greater opportunities for rogue militias to capture migrants, and with rising unemployment and the ever-larger number of migrants arriving in Libya, rogue militias are now more often trading migrants among themselves, ostensibly to extract further ransom from their families. In many cases, migrants are left to die if they cannot obtain the money.

Lack of Control in the South

Libya's southern area of Fezzan, where many migrants first make their entry through the border with Niger, is key to the human trafficking network. Even before the 2011 uprising against Libya's former leader Muammar Gaddafi, the smuggling and human trafficking routes there were well plied. However, Gaddafi's tight control over both the northwestern region of Tripolitania and the eastern region of Cyrenaica kept the trade to Europe relatively well contained.

Much of the Fezzan is under the de facto control of southern tribes, largely the Tebu and Tuareg. The southern tribes have no solid loyalties to any of the three governments vying for control of Libya. They work with the GNA in Tripoli, but also with General Haftar, one of the GNA's main detractors, and his LNA. In fact, many southern tribes anecdotally appear to be more sympathetic to Haftar than to the GNA and remain overtly hostile to the Islamist GNC forces.

While the Tebu and Tuareg largely control the Fezzan area, other smaller tribes are also involved in the smuggling routes toward Tripolitania. Added to this are a number of Sub-Saharan African smugglers and traffickers—mainly of Nigerian and Ghanaian origin—who operate in the south of Libya where they capture migrants upon their arrival in the country. These gangs reportedly operate from warehouses located in Qatrun, Awbari, Sebha and Murzuq and are usually armed by rogue militias, which are in turn often connected to one of the southern tribes.

The majority of the militia smuggling gangs on the southern border are aligned to (or work with) members of the Tebu tribe. Tebu leaders, like Adamu Tchéké and Abu Bakr al-Suqi, collect tolls in cash for travel from the border to the central city of Sebha. Members of the

Awlad Suleiman tribe and the Megarha tribe then organize the smuggling from Sebha to northwestern Tripolitania. Traffickers from the Megarha tribe in particular control the key route from Brak El-Shati to Alshwarif. [3] The Tuareg are more heavily involved in the trade in the Obari area.

A Complex Problem

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is trying to ease the problem by working with the Tripoli government to establish detention centers to eventually deport the migrants back to their home countries. However, there are complications, as many detention centers near Misrata are under the GNC's control. Heavy clashes have occurred between militias aligned with the GNC and militias aligned with the GNA at the Tripoli airport (Rai News, January 15).

Following the August agreement between Italy and the GNA, the GNA was accused of paying off militias responsible for smuggling and trafficking in Sabratha with funds from Italy. The Italian government denied these accusations, in particular denying that funds found their way to the Anas Dabbashi militia, which was particularly known for its smuggling and trafficking activities (ANSA, August 30, 2017).

Similar accusations have been made regarding tribes in the south by the Fezza Organization, with the GNA accused of making payments to the Tebu at the southern border to halt their smuggling and human trafficking activities. However, paying tribes with little government affiliation is likely only a temporary solution—as soon as funds are scarce, smuggling will once again become a source of income.

Further complications include the difficulty of detecting the militias responsible. The Libyan authorities have trouble distinguishing their own government-aligned militias from rogue militias because they often wear the same uniforms, which are sold in local shops, and are typically armed with AK47s, which are readily available on the black market.

Nonetheless, Libyan authorities have managed to arrest traffickers such as Fahmi Salim. Known as the "Smuggling King," he was one of the most notorious smugglers in western Libya. His arrest is an indication that at least some of the Italian funds have gone into tackling lawlessness (ANSA, September 2, 2017). However, it continues to be difficult for the GNA to form its own national army to effectively end the migrant business. Instead, it relies on militias with fluctuating loyalties.

No End in Sight

Libya's political fragmentation means that rogue militias and gangs continue to profit from Libya's people-smuggling networks and the trafficking of migrants, a situation that is unlikely to change as the GNA lacks both the resources and enough effective control to tackle the issue.

The northwestern and southern regions in particular continue to be governed in effect by militias and subject to tribal rivalries. The UN, the EU and Italy's support for the GNA to end the migrant business is risky, because the GNA's sphere of control is largely limited to Tripoli and because the southern tribes remain autonomous.

Although the LNA, under Haftar, has kept control in the east, the various militias in the northwest are arrayed against him. This rivalry is stoked by the influence of actors outside Libya. Haftar is supported by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt, while many northwestern Islamist militias are backed by Qatar. In this context, human trafficking continues to fuel instability through government, tribal and militia rivalries.

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NOTES

[1] Author interview with Mac K. B. Simpson, author on migration and human trafficking based in Tripoli (February 7).

[2] Fezzan Libya Group based in Sebha, an organization that reports on clashes in the area (February 9).

[3] Dzsihad Hadelli, a journalist for the Tripoli-based Libya Observer (February 20).

[3] Additional information on militia members was obtained from the latest UNSC report (June 1, 2017).